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AUTHOR Selcer, Roberta J.; Hilton, Irma R.
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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to investigate whether: (1) children's preferences for activities vary as a function of the cultural stereotypes to which they are exposed; (2) children's perception of appropriate activities for females and males vary as a function of the cultural stereotypes to which they are exposed; and (3) the degree of differences between females and males perceived by children is a function of the cultural stereotypes to which they are exposed. Ss were 12 girls and 12 boys, aged 3-5 years, from a traditional culture, Orthodox Judaism, and 12 girls and 12 boys (same age range) from a nontraditional culture. The parents of the latter group shared the idea that stereotyping of female and male roles harms both sexes. The children were presented individually with pictures of 24 toys, and each child was asked to select her/his eight favorite toys. Next, photos of girls and boys in play situations were shown to the children and stories were read to go with the pictures. Ss were asked to select one child pictured to complete the story. Finally, each subject was asked what he/she thought the differences are between boys and girls. Observational data indicated that the children from the traditional culture played in a very sex-typed manner; at the nontraditional schools, there were no boys' or girls' sides and boys and girls played together. The toy preferences of the traditional boys and girls were significantly different from each other. Non-traditional children were more likely to give non-stereotyped answers to the incomplete story questions. Traditional childred were more likely to differentiate between the sexes, a tendency also related to age. (KM)

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CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN THE ACQUISITION OF SEX-ROLES

Roberta J. Selcer and Irma R. Hilton

Yeshiva University

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Most psychologists, such as Brown (1956, 1958), Rabban (1950), Lansky & McKay (1963), DeLucia (1963), and Hartup & Zook (1960), have accepted the traditional sex-roles of this society as given and regard children whose behavior does not conform to the cultural norms as immature or deviant. Implicit in their discussions of sex-role development are the assumptions that it is psychologically healthier for children to develop stereotyped sex-roles, that there is one "correct" pattern of sex-roles and that children learn their sex-roles in a relatively benign social context. These assumptions are accepted in spite of the fact that "cross-sex" identification in girls has been found to be more beneficial than a "feminine" identification on many dimensions. For instance, Maccoby (1966) found that a "masculine" identification in girls is consistently related to high IQ and creativity; Milton (1957) found that a "cross-sex" identification was related to superior problem-solving ability in girls; and many psychologists such as Gray (1959), Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz and Vogel (1970), and Heilbrun (1962) have related "masculine" interests in females to positive psychological adjustment.

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In recent years, it has been recognized that sex-typing stunts the goals and expectations of both women and men. Rigid sex-roles serve the needs of a masculine-oriented culture by giving the men status and power. The results of psychological research strongly support this viewpoint. Brown (1956) and Kohlberg (1966) have both shown that boys clearly prefer "masculine" toys and activities more than girls prefer "feminine" toys and activities. Wylie (1963) found that junior high school children consistently under-rated the scholastic abilities of girls. S. Smith (1939) and Baldwin, Baldwin, Hilton & Lambert (1969)

found that with increasing age, both girls and boys had a progressively better opinion of boys and a progressively poorer opinion of girls. Kohlberg (1966) concludes: "Although the extent to which power and status are sex-typed differs widely among cultures, whatever sex-typing does exist favors the male. Our review of early gender stereotypes indicated that by age five to six, children award greater power, strength and competence (and consequently more status) to the male."

As late as 1966, C. Smith found that children's development of sex-typed behavior was not related to the degree of sex-role differentiation of their parents, but rather to the influence of cultural stereotypes. Until recently, sex-role stereotypes did not differ much from family to family within the United States. Even when the mother took a more instrumental role or the father a more expressive role, they were considered deviant by the society and no viable subculture supported or reinforced their values.

Subcultures are now developing which attempt to eliminate sex-role stereotyping. By comparing the sex-role attitudes of children from a very traditional subculture to those of children from a subculture devoted to the elimination of traditional sex-roles, the present study attempts to determine the role culture plays in the development of sex-roles.

Sex-role stereotyping must be distinguished from individual preference. If a girl chooses to play with dolls, it does not necessarily mean that she has been trained to fit a sex-role stereotype. On the other hand, if all of the girls in a group choose dolls, none choose trucks, and many even comment when they see a "masculine" toy, "That's for my brother.", it can be assumed that these children have incorporated the many overt and covert cues of the culture which dictate what is "proper" for girls. The possibilities for growth, intellectual and emotional development and achievement of children in such a sex-role stereotyping society must be more limited than in a culture where children have a

greater range of choices and no opportunity is unavailable to them because of their sex.

Specifically, three questions were investigated in the present study:

1. Will children's preferences for activities vary as a function of the cultural stereotypes to which they are exposed?
2. Will children's perception of appropriate activities for females and males vary as a function of the cultural stereotypes to which they are exposed?
3. Is the degree of differences between females and males perceived by children a function of the cultural stereotypes to which they are exposed?

The subjects were 12 girls and 12 boys from a traditional culture, Orthodox Judaism, and 12 girls and 12 boys from a nontraditional culture. They ranged in age from 3 years 9 months to 5 years 6 months.

The values of both groups of children were supported by strong societal norms. The Orthodox Jewish tradition clearly favors males. Zborowski & Herzog (1952), anthropologists who intensively studied Orthodox Jewish family life, conclude: "Despite the recognition of interdependence between the man and the woman, the culture is clearly male-oriented." The traditional children attended an Orthodox Jewish primary school which differentiated male and female roles very overtly.

The children in the nontraditional group either attended a cooperative nursery with a nonauthoritarian, fairly unstructured orientation (10 girls and seven boys) and/or had mothers actively involved in the Womens Liberation Movement (7 girls and eight boys). Their parents shared a common set of values which included the idea that stereotyping of female and male roles harms women and men and the relationship between them.

The experimental procedure was as follows: Initially, the play behavior of the children at each nursery was observed for 1-1/2 hours. The children were then examined individually by the same experimenter and given three tasks to perform. First the child was presented with pictures of 24 toys whose degree of masculinity or femininity had been rated in a previous study by DeLucia (1963). The toy pictures that were used in the study are presented in Table I. The toys ranged from the extremely feminine cosmetics (rating of 8.8) through the neutral clock (5.0) to the extremely masculine football (1.5). All of the pictures were laid out on a large table, and the subject was asked to select her/his eight favorite toys. The experimenter recorded what toys were selected and in what order.

Next the children were shown 5"x7" black-and-white photos of girls and boys in play situations and read stories to go with the pictures. The stories are presented in the appendix. The subjects were asked to select one of the children pictured to complete the story. Finally, each subject was asked: "Tell me -- what do you think are the differences between boys and girls?" The experimenter recorded verbatim what each subject said.

The results were as follows: The observational data indicated that the children from a traditional culture played in a very sex-typed manner; the girls played in the kitchen corner and the boys played with tools and trucks. At the nontraditional schools, there were no kitchen corners or boys' side of the room. Boys and girls constantly played with each other, and it was very rare to see a group of exclusively boys or girls.

In order to examine differences in toy preference selection, the mean rating of all eight toys chosen and the first four toys chosen was computed for each group. These means are shown in Table II. The toy preference of the traditional boys and girls were significantly different from each other, as can be

seen in Table III. This significant difference did not occur between the nontraditional boys and girls. It should be noted here that the mean rating of all toys was 5.1 on a scale ranging from 1.5 to 8.8.

Although the eight-toy choice was less stereotyped than the four-toy choice for both groups, this difference was accentuated in the nontraditional group, suggesting that the relaxation of sex-role restrictions becomes more apparent after the initial assertion of gender identity is made.

The number of children in each group who selected male and female choices on the incomplete story questions was then determined. Significant differences in stereotyping were found between the responses of traditional and nontraditional children on nine of the 21 questions. These differences are presented in Table IV. A stereotyped response occurred when the children in the group agreed as to the sex of the person fitting the role; less stereotyped responses occurred when the number of female responses approached 50%. The nontraditional children were more likely to see the father cleaning the house; boys playing house, teacher, nurse and with dolls; girls playing Cowboys and Indians, doctor and with trucks.

Thirty-one of the 48 children said they did not know the difference between girls and boys. Seventeen children named characteristics such as differences in hair, clothing, toys, physical strength and anatomy. The traditional children were significantly more likely to differentiate between the sexes than the nontraditional children, as can be seen in Table V. The ability to abstract differences between the sexes was also closely related to age: 14 of the 17 children who differentiated were over the median age of 4-1/2 years.

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We have concluded that the results support the theory that sex-role attitudes and behaviors are molded by socialization practices and that they can be changed when the values of the culture and child-rearing practices are changed. Further research needs to be conducted in order to more specifically investigate the extent to which socialization factors can influence the performance of sex-related roles and the effects of such modifications on traditional cultural structures.

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TABLE I

Toy Pictures and Their Ratings (From DeLucia 1963)

Cosmetics	8.8	Alphabet Blocks	4.9
Doll Wardrobe	8.7	Rocking Horse	4.6
Cleaning Set	8.4	Banjo	4.5
Dish Cabinet	8.3	Wheelbarrow	3.2
Sewing Machine	8.2	Tractor	3.0
Jump Rope	7.0	Tinker Toys	2.7
Teddy Bear	5.8	Dump Truck	2.5
Telephone	5.6	Racing Car	2.2
Blackboard	5.3	Tool Set	2.0
Roller Skates	5.3	Plane	1.7
Clock	5.0	Football	1.5

TABLE II

Mean Toy Preference Ratings

	Trad. Boys	Trad.Girls	Non-Trad. Boys	Non-Trad. Girls
8 Toy Choice	3.98	6.47	4.39	5.77
4 Toy Choice	3.78	6.84	3.99	6.27

TABLE III

T-Tests Comparing Mean Toy Preference Ratings

Groups	8-Toy Choice	Sign. Level	4-Toy Choice	Sign. Level
Trad. Boys & Girls	$t_{22} = 1.91$	.05	$t_{22} = 2.09$	.05
Non-Trad. Boys & Girls	$t_{22} = 1.05$	.15	$t_{22} = 1.44$	.10
Trad. & Non-Trad. Boys	$t_{22} = .34$	.75	$t_{22} = .21$	.85
Trad. & Non-Trad. Girls	$t_{22} = .56$	.35	$t_{22} = .34$	.75

TABLE IV

X^2 Tests Comparing Differences Between Groups In Stereotyping of Sex-Roles

Item	Sex	Trad.	Non.-Trad.	X^2 (1 df)	Sign. Level
Cleaning	Female	17	11	3.09	.05
	Male	7	13		
Playing House	Female	22	15	5.77	.01
	Male	2	9		
Cowboys	Female	0	88	9.60	.01
	Male	24	16		
Trucks	Female	3	9	4.58	.05
	Male	21	14		
Dolls	Female	24	17	8.02	.01
	Male	0	7		
Teacher	Female	22	16	3.89	.05
	Male	2	7		
Doctor	Female	0	8	9.60	.01
	Male	24	16		
Nurse	Female	24	19	3.52	.05
	Male	0	4		
Parental Roles	Female	99	80	4.84	.05
	Male	45	64		

TABLE V

X^2 Tests Comparing Number of Children In Each Group Differentiating the Sexes

	Trad. Children	Non.Trad. Children	X^2
Gave Differences	13	4	7.33 (1 df)
Did Not Give Differences	11	20	Sign. at .01

APPENDIX "A"

Incomplete Stories

1. A child is seated on the floor with blocks. A woman and a man are seated on a couch in the background. The subject was told:
    a. Leslie is playing and would like someone to play with her. Who does she ask to come and play?
    b. This child has made a mess on the floor. Who is she going to ask to help clean up the mess?
    c. Leslie is hungry. Who does she ask for something to eat?
    d. Now it is the time for the child to go to bed. Who tells the child: "Leslie, time for bed." ?
    e. Who tucks the child in and gives her a good night kiss?

2. A boy and girl are shown fighting:
    a. These children are fighting. Who do you think started the fight?
    b. One of the children starts crying. Which child?
    c. One of the children is going to run home to tell what happened. Which child?
    d. Who does the child want to tell -- Mommy or Daddy?

3. Two children are looking at each other:
    a. These children want to play different games. Who wants to play house?
    b. Cowboys and Indians?
    c. With trucks?
    d. With dolls?
    e. They decide to first play school. Who will be the teacher?
    f. The principal (the person who runs the school)?
    g. Now they are going to play hospital. Who is the doctor?
    h. The nurse?

4. A boy and girl are shown pulling on a rope:
    a. The children are pulling on a rope, trying to see which one is the strongest and will pull the rope the hardest. Which child do you think is going to win the tug-of-war and get the rope?

5. A small child (A) is shown running to her mother. A boy and girl are playing in the foreground:
    a. This child (point to A) was playing in the yard when one of these children got mean and pushed the child down. Which child do you think pushed Leslie down?
    b. Which child is going over to see if she is alright?

6. In the center foreground, a child is seated on a scooter. A boy and a girl stand in the background:
    a. Leslie has a new scooter and wants someone to push it. Which child do you think she will ask to push it for her?